

THE SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE SCHOOL ON THE TERRITORY OF BANAT SEEN IN DIACHRONIC

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***Abstract:** Throughout history, education has developed with society and has acted as a factor of progress, making use of his material and spiritual values. Changes that occur in society from a socio-political or economic point of view also cause changes in education. We must take into account the fact that in the territories in which Christianity entered, Christian spirituality played a decisive role in founding schools, in supporting cultural activities, as well as in the dissemination of printings. It is useful to be able to take a look from time to time in order to better understand the course of our education up to the present day. It is certain that education and spirituality have been in a close connection since ancient times, supporting each other. An exception is the communist era, when a devastating and aggressive atheism marked the Romanian education, orienting it on the arid path of "scientific rationalism". Man had to forget that he also has a soul, that he has a history behind him, a tradition based on Christian values.*

***Keywords:** Christianity, education, denominational schools, spirituality, school reforms.*

Even though until the tenth century it seems that in the territory of Banat there were no schools, the archaeological evidence confirms that the inhabitants of this land had a high level of culture. Gradually, the Daco-Roman elements were added those assimilated during the coexistence of the indigenous population with different populations that settled here throughout history.

Between the fourth and the tenth centuries, the society on the administrative territory of the former Dacian underwent significant changes, firstly through the transition from the slave to the feudal order. From a linguistic point of view, this period was extremely important, because at that time the Romanian language and people were formed. As is well known, in 271 Emperor Aurelian withdrew from here the army and

the administrative apparatus, but most of the population remained in place. Beginning with the changes brought by the **Edict from Mediolan** (314) promulgated by the Emperor Constantine the Great, which gave freedom of worship to Christianity, this religious current began to gradually take root on both sides of the Danube.

Archaeological researches carried out in Cenad in 1868 confirm the existence of a Christian basilica dating from the III-IV centuries, in this town. Attached to the basilicas there was a baptistery intended for the baptism of a large number of adults, a construction specific to the primary age of Christianity, when the new followers were baptized in large numbers. During the centuries II-V, the baptism presupposed a preparation, which is why was accredited the hypothesis that the respective Baptistery from Cenad could have been annexed also a school where they were trained in the fundamental dogmas of Christianity. However, these assumptions do not lead us to the conclusion that an organized educational system existed in the territory of our country during this dark period. The uncertainty of life, the permanent relocation of human settlements, as well as the devastating raids of the migrant peoples did not allow the establishment of schools and the organization of education.

The only institution that exercised some instructive-educational functions at this time was the church. This represented for a long time a factor of spiritual cohesion, an institution of religious and moral education.

From the tenth century to the sixteenth century, during the period of the early feudalism and the developed one, there were important changes in the whole structure of the society, therefore also in education.

In a close relationship with the organization of the feudal states there was also the church organization. The Hungarian nobility considered that the Christian teaching and implicitly the church represent the most important support for the economic and political power. For this reason, the leadership defended by all means the church institution, convinced that, in its turn, the church urges the believers to obey to the “world domination”.

The pedagogical thinking of those times was encompassed in religious beliefs and in various folk productions such as: proverbs, sayings, old popular songs, legends, fairy tales etc.¹

¹ Papadima, O., *Idei și funcții educative în folclorul românesc*, în *Din istoria pedagogiei românești*, vol. II, București, E.D.P., 1966, pp. 19-43.

The church organization adopted by the Romanians at that time was the Byzantine type, through the Bulgarian branch. The official language of the services was Slavonic, a dead language unknown to the people. Given the fact that the Church was considered the holder of the culture, this language that it adopted became the language of the cult literature, the language of the churches and of the monastery schools.

In the Romanian Country and Moldova, it had become the official language of the state. Banat made a discordant note, in that the Hungarians had received Christianity from Rome, and the official language of the Hungarian feudal state was the Latin. As with Slavonic, the situation was similar with the Latin language: it was also a dead language, which most of the population did not know.

The Orthodox Church in Banat, like that of the rest of the Romanian provinces, did not have a local bishopric and was subordinated either to the bishops in the south of the Danube or to the traveling bishops. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church was much better organized, supported by the Hungarian feudal order. The Catholic bishops manifested sometimes an aggressive proselytizing, for attracting the Romanian Orthodox population to Catholicism, not necessarily from purely religious beliefs, but rather from economic reasons. Fortunately, most of the Romanian population did not abandon their national faith and identity, in exchange for obtaining some advantages, no matter how tempting the stake would have been.

Regarding the training of Orthodox priests, we have no documentary information regarding their level of preparation. Certainly some of them knew to write and read, but most had probably memorized church service, church prayers and chants in Slavonic.

Under the conditions of advanced economic precariousness, caused by the permanent struggles between the feudal people, the influx of the migrant peoples (such as the Pechenegs, the Cumans and the Tatars), the persecutions by the Hungarian nobles and the Catholic church, until the 13th century, the Orthodox church did not had the possibility to set up schools to raise the cultural level of the masses.

The situation is beginning to change since the fourteenth century, when the consolidation of the feudal order in all the regions inhabited by the Romanians determines a better organization regarding the church life. Thus, the bishops and metropolises are constituted and the significant increase in the number of monasteries can be observed. In the lands inhabited by Romanians from Banat and Transylvania, three Catholic

bishops worked, in Cenad, Oradea and Alba Iulia. Through them the culture in Latin has spread in these regions.

The first documented monastery on the territory of the Banat is the one from Morisena (Cenad), built by the Ahtum voivod, at the beginning of the eleventh century and dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. *The legend Sancti Gerhardi* informs us that during the battle between Ahtum and Chanadinus, the latter had prayed to Saint George to help him in the fight, promising him in exchange for help to build a monastery dedicated to him, even at the place where he prayed. After the battle was over, Chanadinus held his promise and erected a monastery at Oroszlamos². Here Chanadinus relocated the Greek monks from Morisena, together with their egumen, and the monastery of St. John the Baptist in Cenad was given to the Roman rite monks, becoming the residence of the Catholic bishops. Its first bishop had been appointed a Benedictine monk - Gerard de Sagredo, later to become Saint Gerard - who, being a cultured man, had supported the opening of a school in Cenad for the preparation of priests. Basically this is the first documented certified school in Banat. Also in this legend, the circumstances in which this school was established, the disciplines taught here, who were the teachers and who were the students were briefly shown. At this episcopal school came to study many Bohemians, Poles, Germans and even French, initially numbering 30 students. Legend does not tell us whether this first step came from the nobility, but it is explicitly stated that the following pupils were exclusively sons of nobles or tyrants. We do not know any details related to the duration of the studies, but we know that the disciplines studied here were: grammar, reading and music.

In the following centuries many Catholic monasteries were established in the Hungarian kingdom (thus also in Banat), which later became important cultural centers. In addition to some of them there were schools and some even had libraries. In the town of Igriş in the county of Timiș, the Catholic monks from Pontigny from France founded a monastery in which they brought a significant number of works. This is the first library in our country. Here were found besides the works of renowned church writers, such as: St. Augustine, Jerome, Gregory of Nazianz and the works of some classical Latin writers, such as: Seneca, Cicero or Suetoniu³. Having the extensive estates they used, the bishops and the Catholic monasteries had the financial means to organize the

² a locality today on the territory of Hungary.

³ Constantinescu R., Lazea E., *O bibliotecă monastică din Transilvania pe la 1200*, în Studii, tom 22, nr. 6, 1969, pp. 1145-1153.

schools well, thus becoming true models for those that will appear later in the cities and villages.

The school from Cenad developed in the following decades, so it was necessary to increase the number of teachers, numbering four teachers altogether. But its advance was interrupted by the invasion of the Tartars, who in 1241 had destroyed in addition to the bishopric and the school from Cenad, many other churches and monasteries in Banat. After the ceasefire, in the 13th-16th centuries, the school here became a well-organized, middle-class institution.

Since the school in Cenad was not only preparing church staff but also officials needed for the chancellors from different institutions and feudal offices, it was necessary to introduce other educational disciplines, such as: rhetoric, poetry, logic, mathematics, church music, teaching languages being the two major European languages of culture at that time, Latin and Greek.

It is not known with certainty whether children of Romanians were taught in this school, but it can be assumed that the young people from the Romanian noble families converted to Catholicism would not have had any impediment to attend the courses of this school. This school did not directly impact on the cultural development of the Romanians from Banat, who were under the direct influence of the Orthodox monasteries, which we know were reduced in number, very poor and permanently persecuted. Probably schools also worked in addition to these, but until the sixteenth century we do not have accurate information about their existence. The most well-known Orthodox monasteries of the Romanians from Banat were: Vodița, Partoș, Hodoș-Bodrog, Săraca, Mrăcunea, Bezdin, Sîngeorgiu. Some of them certainly existed during the Turkish occupation (1552-1716), others were destroyed by the Turks. In these vitreous conditions of existence, they could not form renowned scholars. Cultural concerns did exist, however, as evidenced by the existence of *Octoih* in the Slavonic language (dating from the XII-XIV centuries) discovered in Caransebeș⁴.

In these monasteries, as in other Romanian provinces or in the south of the Danube, the disciplines were differentiated, depending on the level of schooling. Thus the future priests first learned Slavonic reading and writing, Orthodox dogmas, church pavilions and chants, while the iconic paintings, the diets and the singers learned from the monks the calligraphy, the drawing, the manuscript binding, the painting, etc.

⁴ Panaitescu P.P., *Introducere la istoria culturii românești*, București, Ed. Științifică, 1969, p. 262.

In the 16th-17th centuries, the economic, social-political and cultural situation of the Banat was marked by numerous disturbances and transformations, such as: the expansion of Turkish power, the struggles between the Habsburgs and the Hungarian nobility for the crown of Hungary, as well as the religious reform. During this period, in Banat, especially in the lands belonging to the Principality of Transylvania, a significant blanket of skilled tradesmen and merchants became strong promoters of Romanian culture and education.

The first books translated into Romanian were: *Romanian Catechism from Sibiu* (1544), Coresi's prints, *Palia from Orăștie*, etc. Their translators were aware that their version in Romanian is intended for the masses who did not know the cult languages. Deacon Coresi shows in his work *Gospel with Teaching* (Brașov, 1581), that this book was printed in Romanian: "in order to make it easier and easier to understand for the stupid people"⁵.

In Banat, the assertion of the Romanian language in writing has occurred almost simultaneously with the other Romanian provinces. *Palia de Orăștie* (1582), the Calvinist Romanian schools in Caransebeș and Lugoj, the monastery schools in this province confirm that the Romanian language had earned its place in the Banat culture of the 16th-17th centuries.

Since in this period the church was the holder of the culture, it was natural for the schools to have a confessional character: Orthodox, Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, etc.

During this period, the Roman-Catholic church remained a significant cultural power, organizing schools near the church centers and monasteries. Elementary education was more for the Franciscans, while the average and higher were the Jesuits.

Catholic schools in Banat and Transylvania were organized according to the model of the West. Most of them had well-trained teachers and worked in imposing buildings. The teaching language was Latin. In the parochial schools, the students learned their religion, reading, writing and church songs. Only in the higher grades were the students trained in the field of the seven liberal arts, divided into two cycles: **trivium** (grammar, rhetoric and dialectics) and **quadrivium** (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music). In addition to knowing the Bible and the church writers, the works of leading Latin writers, such as: Virgil, Cicero, Horațiu or Ovidiu, were also studied.

⁵ Bianu I., Hodoș N., *Bibliografia românească veche*, tom I, 1500-1716, București, 1903, p. 92.

Until the pattern appeared, the students did not have school textbooks, but they wrote after dictation the information provided by the teachers. From sixteenth century began to be used in Catholic schools also printed textbooks, such as *the Catechism of Peter Canisius*, *the grammar manual of Aelius Donatus and the one of Alexander de Villa Dei*, *the dialectic manual of Michael Vratislaviensis*, *the one of arithmetic of Gheorghe of Hungary* etc.

It should be emphasized that the discipline in these schools was severe and carefully regulated. Beneficiaries of these forms of education could also be young Romanians converted to Catholicism, as were, for example, two outstanding personalities of the Caranese culture: George Buitul and Gavril Ivul.

The universal requirement at European level for every people to have access to the Bible in their native language, has led to the creation of a large number of schools in fairs and cities, for small nobility, for merchants and craftsmen, and for villages for peasants. It is often said that the school is a result of the Reformation, but it should be noted that the Reformation itself is a consequence of the economic, social and political transformations that took place between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The main confession that attracted the largest number of nobles, craftsmen and merchants in these lands was Calvinism. The Calvinists set up popular schools, gyms and even colleges, maintaining the organization and content of the curricula of Catholic education.

In Hațeg the opening of a Romanian Calvinist school in the 16th century is reported, which seems to have worked until around 1680. Similar schools had appeared in Covăsinți (near Arad) and for a short time in Fagaras (1657-1700).

In the territory of Banat we have few testimonies regarding the existence of the Calvin schools. One of them existed in Lipova (1530-1551) and some others in Timișoara. The most important in influence are the Calvin schools in Lugoj and Caransebeș, financially supported by the small nobility, the merchants and the craftsmen from these localities. The dates of their establishment are not known exactly, but with certainty the school from Caransebeș already existed in 1582, when the *Palia de Orăștie* was printed, referring to it. Both schools resisted until the end of the sixteenth century and managed to become well known.

In the Romanian villages of Banat, the Protestant currents were not very successful, but the idea of education in the mother tongue found

many adherents. As Nicolae Albu noted⁶, it seems that there was an elementary education in Romanian, in some villages and cities (outside Caransebeș there are also mentioned Orșova and Iaz), in which they teach private persons, most of whom were priests.

The Romanian monasteries continued their cultural activity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Only that the teaching activity diminished in Banat, both because of the disturbances caused by the Reformation and because of the Turkish occupation. Some of the holy places were burned or destroyed by the Turks, while others lost their estates. Only a few of them continued their activity under the new ownership. Probably priests, ten, copyists, iconographers, singers, etc. were trained within them.

After the liberation of Banat from Ottoman rule, the activity of the Catholic and Orthodox monastic orders experienced a remarkable revival. In the churches and monasteries of Banat, many books have been printed during these two centuries in the other Romanian provinces. The exchanges that took place were not only limited to printings, but also frequent visits of priests, monks, teachers, iconographers etc., which contributed significantly to the consolidation of the unity of the Romanian people and language.

At the end of the seventeenth century, endless wars took place between the Austrians and the Turks, the result of which was the liberation of Hungary and the Romanian provinces in western Transylvania from Ottoman rule. The Austrian empire took the place of Turkish rule, and as a reward for the Serbs' contribution to the liberation war under the yoke of the heathens, Emperor Leopold I had granted them plenty of exemptions and rights. Thus, the Serbian metropolitan became the head of the Eastern rite churches in the entire Austrian empire, implicitly also in Banat. Metropolitan Cernoevici appoints Serbian bishops in Timișoara, Caransebeș and Ineu in 1695, and in this context the guardianship of the Serbian hierarchy will become even more felt. Thus, the preservation of the Slavic language and the Cyrillic alphabet in the church and in print is also justified. In all this state of fact, one can also see an advantage in terms of preserving the Orthodox faith in the face of countless attempts to convert to Catholicism or Protestantism.

The most notable result obtained by the Catholic propaganda consisted in attracting a part of the Romanians from Banat and especially from Transylvania to "unite" with the Roman Catholic church, thus giving

⁶ Albu N., *Istoria învățământului românesc din Transilvania până în 1800*, Blaj, 1944, p. 184.

birth to a new hybrid rite: the Greek-Catholic one. His adherents, although many were promised by the Vienna leadership, were given little. Neither the promise to raise the status of a servant, nor that of being granted certain rights to culture, was respected. Even so, towards the end of the eighteenth century, a school with teaching in Romanian language appears for Blaj for Greek-Roman Catholics.

In order to increase the population of Banat, especially in order to ensure the labor force, but also to make this province "*a strong bastion of Habsburg expansionist policy and a support to keep Transylvania and Hungary under obedience*"⁷, the Austrian leadership brought here a large number of colonists of different origins: Germans, Italians, French, Spaniards and Bulgarians. They were good craftsmen, skilled farmers or experienced miners, so that through their experience they contributed significantly to the province's progress.

The reverse of this state of affairs was, however, the following: through colonization, the strengthening of Catholicism in Banat was sought. Among the newcomers were priests and teachers, who gradually set up new schools and churches with the material support of the state. The colonists, mostly Germans, had set up schools in the localities where they settled, primarily for their children. These German elementary schools were attended by one third of the number of school-age children. In the localities where the German population lived alongside the Romanian and the Serbian, at these schools a small number of Romanian and Serbian students also learned.

If until the eighteenth century the state did not concern itself with the "people's school", leaving it in the care of churches or individuals, it is now regarded as an institution with political tasks and therefore comes to the attention of the state. Following the visit to Banat in 1768, Emperor Joseph II had ascertained the precarious state of education among the population of Romanian and Serbian origin.

In September 1769, the Habsburg leadership returned with an Instruction for the administration of the Banat, which refers to the Romanian and Serbian schools from here. It is proposed that a school director of Greek-Eastern (Orthodox) religion be appointed to oversee schools, select teachers on the basis of competence and high morality, as well as guide them regarding didactic approach. Within the same Instruction, it was also planned to publish a manual in Romanian and Serbian, which should first contain a presentation of catechism as an introduction to elementary education and then Christian morality briefly.

⁷ Țintă A., *Colonizările habsburgice în Banat, 1716-1740*, Ed. Facla, Timișoara, 1972, p. 32.

Based on the notes found on church books, it can be established that schools were operating in some Romanian localities in Banat and before 1700: in Orșova there was a school in 1686, in Caransebeș in 1695⁸, and in Iaz (near Caransebeș) in 1698⁹. These schools, like the monasteries, were responding to the economic and spiritual needs of the Romanian communities of that period. Their existence confirms the idea that there was a popular elementary education in the Romanian villages, before the Habsburg colonization.

In the capital of the province - Timișoara - the Jesuits had set up since 1717 a gymnasium, which will develop in the following years, from two classes to six¹⁰. Also, in Caransebeș there was a Franciscan-run gymnasium, between 1742 and 1787¹¹. According to the custom of the time, in these secondary schools, students of the Catholic religion were taught first, but they were accepted and orthodox. The language of instruction was exclusively Latin, and the organization resembled that of the Western schools run by the Jesuits. Apart from the disciplines in the school curricula, various events were organized, such as: plays, theological disputes or holiday exams.

In the first half of the 18th century, there were also Romanian elementary schools in villages, a fact attested by some notes found on the church books, such as the one on a shrine in the village of Greoni, near Oravița: "... my father Elijah, who was a teacher at school here in Greoni and died in the year of the Lord since the salvation of the world 1735."¹² Notes of the same type were also studied by the teacher Iuliu Birou, who had established on their basis the whole series of teachers from the Ticvanu Mare community, from 1724, until the middle of the last century¹³.

The historian Nicolae Tincu Velea tells us that in 1736, he had come from Tismana, from the Romanian Country, Vasile Diaconu Loga together with 50 Romanian families and founded the village of Srediștea Mare (today on the territory of Serbia, in the region of Vojvodina). Diaconu Loga seems to have been a good scholar and a skilled painter, endowments that supported him in opening a school where many scholars

⁸ Ghidin A., Bălan I., *Monografia orașului Caransebeș*, Caransebeș, 1909, p. 185.

⁹ Albu N., *op. cit.* p. 60.

¹⁰ Schwicker, I.H., *Geschichte des Temesvarer Banats*, p. 310; Wolf I., *Das Schulwesen des Temesvarer Banats im 18. Jahrhundert*, p. 36 și urm.

¹¹ Milleker F., *Geschichte des Banater Schulwesens unter Maria Teresia 1740-1774*, Vîrșeț, 1940, p. 12.

¹² Stoia-Udrea I., *Marginale în istoria bănățeană*, Timișoara, 1940, p. 16.

¹³ Birou V., *Năzuințe și realizări*, Timișoara, 1941, pp. 1-15.

and painters, such as his son Gheorghe, the father of the renowned Romanian scholar Constantin Diaconovici Loga, would come out¹⁴.

On a minei¹⁵ in Caransebeș, the teacher Vasile Popovici noted on March 4, 1748 that he was a deacon and teacher in Iaz (locality near Caransebeș), and on August 14, 1749 he showed that he came to Caransebeș to learn grammar, and now he is a perfect priest¹⁶. We can thus deduce that in the mid-18th century a gymnasium with two classes was operating in Caransebeș. These two first classes were called grammar, according to the didactic organization of that time, the following being already intended for the study of more complex disciplines, such as: in the syntactic third class, in the poetic fourth class, in the 5th rhetoric, and in the VI philosophy.

Similar notes confirm the existence of some elementary schools in Romania and in other localities, such as: Lipova, Făget, Maidan. In Vinga there was a school in Latin and Romanian in 1744.

In *Banat's Chronicle*, Nicolae Stoica de Hațeg presented the line of teachers in Mahadia, prior to 1767, some of them even being his teachers during the period when he studied there (1757-1762). But it does not specify the period of each of the eleven teachers at the chair, but after a simple calculation, if each had taught at least a year, it turns out that in Mehadia there was an education organized at least from 1753.

There were certainly Romanian schools in other villages, besides those mentioned, but their number was low, the intermittent functioning and the material base extremely precarious. The reality is that almost everywhere in Europe at that time there is the same phenomenon: a poor organization of mass education, although the countries of the West had not encountered the 164-year-old Turkish occupation we had endured.

Even though in the period 1718-1774 the Austrian state has steadily supported the organization of education, reserving the right to lead and control all schools, which characterizes popular education in all nationalities in the empire during this period is its subordination to the church. The school was placed in the service of the church, the educational content being predominantly religious.

An official document, called *General Record*, dated April 1, 1768, is kept, which makes an inventory of the Romanian and Serbian schools existing throughout the Banat of Timișoara, the number of students who

¹⁴ Velea, N.T., *Istoria bisericească...*, Sibiu 1865, pp. 201-202.

¹⁵ Minei: Orthodox church book in 12 parts, for the 12 months of the year, with religious services for months and days, cf <https://dexonline.ro/intrare/minei/34370>.

¹⁶ Ghidiu A. și Bălan I., *Monografia orașului Caransebeș*, pp. 40-41.

taught in these schools, as well as the disciplines taught¹⁷. In this Record it is specified that in 1763, 66 schools were operating in the whole Banat, in which they were learning on average 17 schoolchildren / unit, totaling 1129 children of Orthodox religion (Greek unified). Most of them were mixed, that is, they taught both Romanian and Serbian children, but the preponderance of one of these nations in one location had probably caused the respective Enrollment to mention that out of the 66 existing schools, 43 worked for students of Serbian nationality and 23 for those of Romanian nationality.

Regarding the pedagogical approach in the period 1716-1774, we should mention that the priority was the reading, then writing, less arithmetic. School textbooks were usually church books, and as a novelty the first “bucvare” appeared. Of course, they are also predominantly religious. For the students of German origin, the textbooks were written in German, for the Romanian students the books were in Slavonic, while for the Serbs, the church books and the bavors were written in the Slavonic Serbian Church language. The learning was based on memorizing prayers and religious texts individually. The students started with the learning of the mules (of the Cyrillic letters), then they went on to read from *Ceaslov* and finally his memorable one, even if they did not know the Slavonic language perfectly. This process took at least two years. After its completion, it was moved to *Psaltire*, which was also memorized entirely, also in Slavonic. We then went on to learn the *Catavasi* (church prayers and songs) both as a text and as a melody. After the student acquired his knowledge of all three reference works in Slavonic, he could be hired to sing and read in the church. Some of them, however, chose to become apprentices with a merchant and learned from him the writing and accounting. Those who wished to become priests, had to study *the Apostle* and, finally, *the Gospel*. In these schools little is learned about writing and reckoning, considered little useful for church duties. It is true that those who did not work anywhere, for a short time forgot everything they learned in school for 5-6 years.

For the Orthodox schools in the Provincial Banat, new laws were drafted, brought together in two documents: *Regulae directivae*, in 1774 and *Schulpatent*, in 1776. In general, these laws have a progressive content, with explicit requirements that the school premises had to meet, teacher training, pay, as well as control of schools. The same progressive tendency is also observed in terms of the content of education: the

¹⁷ Wolf, H., *Das Schulwesen des Temesvarer Banats im 18. Jahrhundert (Învățământul din Banatul Timișoarei în secolul al XVIII-lea)*, Baden Bei Wien, 1935, p. 40.

arithmetic is introduced, as an object of compulsory study, as well as the teaching of agricultural knowledge in the larger localities. However, the law retains many features of medieval education: the financing of the education process belongs to the communes and the preservation of a high percentage of the disciplines in the religious sphere.

Subsequent regulations, brought together in *Schulpatent*, provide clarification on the need to build new schools, in the middle of localities, near the church. Also in this school Patent, details are also made regarding the teacher's preparation, employment and duties. The teacher was elected by the municipality, with a majority of votes, but only after the proposed persons had been verified and examined by the school director. To occupy a position as a teacher, the person in question had to have a good knowledge of reading, counting and religion and, last but not least, to have the moral qualities to recommend him for the fulfillment of this mission: modesty, seriousness, goodwill.

T. Iancovici showed in a table made in 1781 that the situation in that year was as follows: in Timiș county there were 150 localities and 106 teachers, in Torontal county 82 localities and 70 teachers, and in Caraș county 220 localities and 117 teachers¹⁸. School networks would have a permanent dynamic, sometimes changing even during a single year.

This is where the beginning of elementary school education was made. Of the 348 Romanian and Serbian schools in Banat at the end of the eighteenth century, 316 had Romanian, 27 Serbian, and 5 of them had mixed Romanian-Serbian education. From this it follows that almost all the Romanian and Serbian localities located today on the Romanian territory benefited from schools, which is a great success compared to even advanced European states.

Apart from these Romanian and Serbian schools, in the period 1775-1800, about 100 German, Hungarian and Bulgarian schools were operating. Obviously, the language of instruction was closely related to the religious orientation of the children attending these educational institutions. Unfortunately, higher education schools did not work in Banat until 1800. High school graduates with financial possibilities - Romanians, Germans, Hungarians, Serbs - went to academies and universities in Austria (Vienna, Buda, Cluj), Italy (Bologna, Padova, Ferrara), France, Germany or Switzerland.

The revolution of 1821 led by Tudor Vladimirescu marked the beginning of the process of formation of the modern Romanian state, a

¹⁸ Wolf I., *Organizarea școlilor bănățene în anii 1770-1800 și activitatea pedagogului Teodor I. Iancovici, în Din istoria pedagogiei românești*, București, ESDP, 1957, pp. 86-91.

change that would have its mark on the process of implementing some national education and education systems. This process took place throughout the nineteenth century. Certainly, the territories under Habsburg domination had an advantage over the Romanian Country or Moldova. Until the second half of the 19th century, Banat and Transylvania had a network of primary and secondary schools, with literacy being high in these regions. Thus, different types of educational institutions have emerged: elementary schools, gyms, colleges, universities, as well as laws for the organization and operation of this system. The most important of these were *the Organic Regulations, Cuza's law, Spiru Haret's laws* and others. Despite all the changes, higher education remains reserved for young people from wealthy families.

The ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza approves in 1864 the first *Law of Public Instruction* regulating the organization and functioning of the educational system. According to her, education was divided into three main cycles: primary, secondary and higher. The primary cycle included primary schools in rural and urban communes, the secondary cycle - high schools, gyms, seminars, fine arts schools, real, professional and secondary girls' schools, and the upper one included the faculties of letters, mathematical and physical sciences, of law and medicine.

In 1866 the first Regulations of order and discipline for the high schools and the gymnasiums appeared, and in 1870 a similar regulation for the primary schools. They established the obligations and rights of students and teachers, the rules of conduct, as well as the system of punishments and rewards.

Speaking of a united Romania, it was natural for the directions to be unitary also in the field of education, in order to support the unity of language and kind. Thus, the spelling reforms of 1862 allowed a unique system of education throughout Romania.

After the first World War, with the realization of the Romanian unitary national state and the education had to adapt to the new factual situation. Thus, the various educational systems that had worked until then were integrated and, a very important step, a significant part of the country's population had access to an organized form of education. Primary education was then compulsory and free for all citizens.

After World War II, the liberal education system was replaced by a Soviet-type system, based on ideology and mass indoctrination. This was the time when religion was completely eliminated from schools because it was no longer compatible with communist doctrine. Much has been lost by this elimination, and the Communist leaders have realized later that by

the forced adoption of a new foreign system of thought, the national identity is gradually lost. Religion had modeled until recently, it had made its mark on the education of entire generations of our ancestors from all provinces of the homeland, so this abusive elimination could not be auspicious.

By the decree no. 175 of August 3, 1948, in the Romanian schools the system of the single textbook was imposed. In a first phase, only manuals were developed for the elementary cycle, lasting seven years. These were just translations of Soviet textbooks. Obviously, the question of national identity could not be raised in this context and, even less, religion no longer had its place in this pro-Soviet and pro-communist vision.

Education itself was considered by the Communist government as an important tool to control people and create the "new man". The reforms of 1949 were extremely drastic, and their application was aimed at destroying the old system and implementing a new version. As a result, a large number of educators, teachers and teachers were arrested or killed, and their seats were often taken by less qualified, but obedient, party leadership. Another dramatic consequence was the closure of private and religious schools. These were subsequently taken over by the state and completely restructured to align with public education. New subjects were introduced, such as Russian - mandatory at all levels, while French was eliminated. Other subjects in the humanist branch, such as sociology, psychology or philosophy, have been completely reformed on the basis of Stalinist dogma. In a word, scientific atheism has taken the place of religion. Censorship has become widespread, with many classical authors being completely banned.

The spiritual drought that followed could not destroy the ontological roots of our nation.

Since the Revolution of December 1989, the Romanian education system has been in a continuous reorganization process. The school starts from the age of 6 and is compulsory until the 10th grade. As far as higher education is concerned, it complies with European legislation, being structured on three levels of university studies: bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees¹⁹.

One of the advantages that the freedom gained in December 1989 brought is the reintroduction of religion into the school curriculum. The benefits of studying this discipline are numerous. Beyond the cultural argument (very important indeed), religious education invites reflection,

¹⁹ <https://www.edu.ro/institutii-invatamanant-superior>, consultat în 24 martie 2020.

self-knowledge, referring us as free people to higher value standards. In a period of dissolution of the moral landmarks, religious education can bring a new breath in terms of behavioral aspects, both individually and socially. In the context in which even the ethical codes of secular sources have more and more cracks, religious morality can fill a void or help us to overcome certain existentialist orientation syncope. Moreover, religious values are meant to bring people together, to coagulate communities, or the identity of a community is also expressed by assuming common religious values, adopted and expressed without any external constraints.

To be initiated into the mysteries of Christianity, is to be educated in the perspective of self-development. Each person, regardless of their personal background or social context, can follow the spiritual ascendant, being able to perfect and save, until the last moment.

For the Romanian people, since its birth, faith in God has been an important coagulation factor. It is not by coincidence that the time of our Christianity coincides with that of our formation as a people.

Finally, we must remember that centuries of Romanian culture were consumed in monasteries or churches, and the church staff was the main human factor of propagating the culture in society. Also, important Orthodox, Catholic or Greek-Catholic clergy have been involved in major historical events, marking the evolution of the Romanian people.

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